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DEATH (GA) IN DAN CULTURE

BY

GEORGE W. W. TABMEN

DEATH(GA) IN DAN CULTURE

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INTRODUCTION

PRESENTATION OF THE DAN TRIBE

The Dan Po-me are the people of the Dan tribe who claim to have derived from the North and now occupy parts of Liberia, Guinea, and Ivory Coast. The tribe is known by two different names: Gio for Liberia and Yakuba for those in Ivory Coast. Gio is merely a name of a Dan section in the Tapehta zone in Liberia and not the proper name for the tribe. The Gio section out of which the name Gio emerged comprised of the following towns: Lor-u-play, Gbaaplay, Sahlay, and Slangonplay. Yakuba is also a Mandingo name given to the Dans in Ivory Coast by the Mandingoes. It is said that the word Yakuba derived from the Dan word "yapobaa", meaning, "he or she says." The former Paramount Chief Lororgehyagbe of the Loe Chiefdom in Ivory Coast explained that the name Yakuba was erroneously given by a French explorer who discovered the Dan tribe after hearing "yapobaa" repeatedly by his Dan interpreter. The people are Dan by tribe and sometimes call themselves Dan Po-me and Aponen. (Aponen means "I say," and ME in Po-me is human being or person).

Dan is a tonal language which comprises about eleven major accentual groups. THE LIBERIAN GROUPS OF LUUZINYA-ME (upper Nimba County Dans): (1) Niquia-me, (2) Nyor-me, (3) Yao-me, (4) San-me, (5) Beyo-me, (6) Gbeh-me, and (7) Gouzinya-me or Gbehya-me; one large Dan group living in the lower Nimba County. This group speak one common accent. The people of Quila Clan among this group speak with the San idioms and accents due to the common border with some San towns. The Boe clan in

the Gouzinya-me group also speaks with the Yao-me idioms and accents for having close border with them. The pure Gouzinya-me are considered to be the people living in Gbehya, Doe, and Gblor-or Clans; they speak the correct Gouzinya Dan without any Saan and Yao accents and tones. The Ivory Coast Dan groups are: (1) Loe-me, comprising Don-me, Nyor-or-me, and Mlorr-me groups; (2) Bloe-me; (3) Wao-me, and (4) ~~Man-me~~ .

Every Dan group is subdivided into family circle. The language differs in some spoken words and accents according to the distances that separate one group from another. Nevertheless, the Wao-me and Bloe-me altered idioms are complicated. There is no characterized syllabic accent in the Dan spoken by the Nyor Dans; they speak the plain Dan wo (wo is language or word) and sometimes the spoken accents inherited from the neighbouring accentual Dan groups through inter-marriages.

The following are the five Dan chiefdoms in Liberia: (1) Gbeh-le Dan Chiefdom, mistakingly known as Gbehlay Geh Chiefdom. The chiefdom is occupied by the Gbeh, Soe, Slor, Zor, and the Beyo elements. (2) Zoe Dan Chiefdom, misrepresented as Zoe-Geh Chiefdom. The chiefdom is occupied by the Nyor-me, Niquia-me, Yao-me, Saan-me, including Zoe, Gbao, Gbor-or, and Weeyay clans. (3) Boe and Quila Chiefdom, consisting Boe and Quila clans, with the Maar-me and Yoe-me sub groups. (4) Kpeahplay Chiefdom, inhabited by two Niquia towns, Beeyaytuo and Podor-u-glai with some Gehs that speak and understand both Geh (Krahn) and Dan. (5) Doe Chiefdom; inhabited by Gbehya-me, comprising Doe and Gblor-or

families. Gbehya-me is the correct name for the Dans in the Tapehta District. Tapehta or Tapehplay is the name of a town built by the late powerful chief Tapeh; the town is the headquarters for the Doe Chiefdom and for the district. The people who live in this territory are called Gbehya-me or Gouzingya-me. There is another chiefdom called Gbii and Lorwulu Chiefdom in the Tapehta District which was recently annexed to the Dan chiefdoms for administrative reason. The chiefdom brought the Liberian Dans to the total number of six chiefdoms. The Gbii and the Lorwulu speak a dialect that is understood by them alone; they also understand and speak Dan, Geh, Mano, and Bassa influently.

The four Dan groups in Ivory Coast consisted six chiefdoms. Some clans or family groups within those chiefdoms mentioned above are Lor-or-me, Win-enme, and Kah-me. Danane town is the administrative headquarters for the Ivory Coast Dans while Sanniquillie town in Liberia is the local Government seat for the Liberian Dans. Sayingbay (Sanniquillie) is a Mano town, central administrative seat for both Mah-me (Mano) and the Dan tribes.

The Kpeahplay Chiefdom forms boundary with the Tchien Gehs (Krahns). The territory populated by the Gehs is called in Dan Geh-le, and I assume it is the word which is spelled by Ladislav Segy as "Guere" in his book entitled "African Sculpture Speaks." Le, in the Dan language means area of or within. Geh-le extends to Toleauple chiefdom in Ivory Coast. The Gehs or Gior Po-me are the people in Liberia known as Krahns. According to the oral historians, Krahn was a Geh ruler who led the immigration of the Geh tribe into Ivory Coast and Liberia.

Although the DAN people believe in immortality of the soul, in life in the hereafter and in reincarnation of the deceased's spirit in unborn kin-children, DEATH is to them a terrifying and repulsive reality.

When somebody dies in the community, there is an instinctive horror at the thought of possibly meeting the errant soul as it has not reached yet its new abode.

To dispatch more quickly the spirit toward its final destination, an elaborate scheme of traditional send-off is enacted as ~~the~~ festivities are publicly ministered by minstrels and masked figures of the social and festive cycle to alleviate fears and put the community in a gay and receptive mood.

Our study of DEATH in Dan culture will manifest the ~~two~~ two trends; inbred horror of death and the counterbalance of the ~~cow-feast~~ festival. Hence two parts of our monograph:

- i. HOW DEATH CAME INTO THE WORLD.
- ii. THE DEATH CEREMONIES IN NYOR DIAPLAY.

Among the subtitles of part one, the reader will investigate with interest the metaphysical concepts of the Dan tribe, and the customs and beliefs related to death.

The ceremonies were on the occasion of the death and burial of the author's father. The author appears in the text as Woboa Tabmengbe or Woboa which is his tribal name. Gbe is the word for son in Dan.

From Dan lore:

HOW DEATH (GA) CAME INTO THE WORLD

God Xlan created us free and equal. No man was considered more important than others. There was no leader for those first people besides Xlan as there was no need for one because every man was rich and behaved according to the will of Xlan. Nothing like Ga (death) was known among the people.

Despite that graceful life which the people were living, they were not happy and they approached God for a chief. While having audience with God in heaven they were impulsively impressed by a certain man that emerged to their sight. They gazed at him for his handsomeness. That man was called Du (Witch). Through the influence of Du's appearance, the delegates unanimously recommended his name to Xlan for their chief. Xlan refused to grant the petition on the ground that Du was not good for man. But God had no other alternative than to grant their request after they had insisted four days. Du descended to earth with man.

Six persons died on the day Du arrived on earth. Before one week had passed more than one hundred had died. The people were in consternation. They attempted to slay Du but he was invulnerable. They even set fire to the house in which Du was lodging while he was at sleep, the entire house burnt into ashes and Du was unhurt. Two men ran up to God and begged Him to remove Du from among them. God instructed them to return and smite Du with a vine with which firewood has been bundled, "that

wt

will cause his instant death." They were further instructed not to touch Du's corpse when he is dead.

DEATH AND EVIL

Men followed Xlan's instructions and Du died. A set of two men was again sent up to God for another instruction concerning Du's remains. Xlan descended with them on earth. He asked them to bring Du's remains, but it could not be produced as the corpse had disappeared; God became furious with men.

ORDEAL TRIAL BY SASSYWOOD

All the trees in the forest disturbed God by the noise they made with their leaves while God was in Du's council with His people, excepting one tree; that tree was sassywood GLI (Dan name). God called Gli a wise tree and ordered the two men who had come with Him from heaven to walk to the Gli tree and ~~extract~~ extract some barks from it for a trial He was organizing in order to know of the whereabouts of Du's body. They pounded the barks in mortar and diluted it into water. The solution was administered internally to all the people in the town. The guilty ones were affected and some died. They confessed eating the corpse and claimed that Du's remains looked fat and edible. The innocents vomited and were thus exonerated from consequences. God declared to them that since they had partaken of evil and

made it their flesh and bones, evil and death would remain with man, most especially the cannibals. Today's evil doers are claimed to be the descendants of those early ancestors that devoured the flesh of Du and the people who are pure in hearts supposed to be the heirs of the innocent forbears. The practice of sassywood ordeal trial continued to 19th century when it was abolished in the past recent years by the Liberian and Ivory Coast Governments. It was administered to those suspected of witchery, most especially in the case of suspicious death in the community.

Nevertheless, the belief in the power of sassywood and of the rope with which firewood has been bundled, still exists in other aspects of the cultural life of the Dan people. Today one can see hanging above the doors of some Dan habitations barks of sassywood to keep out the spirits of the dead who are claimed as disturbing their homes and unwilling to go to Glebor-or to face judgement because of their evil deeds. In the case of the firewood rope, if a man died of sudden death in the community, his remains are bathed by a left handed man who also ties the corpse with the vine or rope which has been used for bundling firewood. The remains are kept alone overnight in an enclosed house. If he was killed by a hunter while in an animal form or by a Menkunplan Zoe in the spirit world, the wounds made by the

weapon would be exposed on the deceased's body in the morning by the power of the rope.

(2)

HOW DEATH (GA) CAME INTO THE WORLD

This second story on how death came into the world begins that when God created man, he was healthy, honest, and clean without blemish - death had no power on him. Man reproduced and occupied the portion of earth given to him by God Xlan. The town became so much populated that the inhabitants could not easily move about to one another. A delegation was sent up to God to discuss the situation with Him. God gave them an Occult Charm which He named GOR DU (Ruling Witch), explaining to them that its issue was a deadly poison and because of that it must be guarded by an established Cult to be controlled by a group of selected experienced elders who would act as priests.

The purpose for which Du was given to them was to be used in the food of very old people to make space on earth for younger generations. The rule was that no single person should make the decision to administer the poison; it had to be done with the consent of the Council of elders.

Immediately after Du was brought to earth and was thus introduced to the community with its governing and taboos, the first wife of their chief stole some of the poison and surreptitiously administered it to her husband. His sudden death was a shock to all. The men went to God and asked Him why their father had died so suddenly. God endowed them with a Vital Force called ZOELEH DU which gave them power to transfigure themselves in order to



detect, disclose and destroy those who would use DU for evil. The woman was found out with all those who had facilitated or participated in the evil act. Nevertheless the KORGBIN DU (evil force) which had acted through the woman and her helpers still inspired her and led her to escape her anointed pursuers. KORGBIN DU has been unable to prevail against ZOELEH DU, but it is a fight which is still going on, the spirit of evil getting inspiration and force from Xlan Yaa, the god of evil while ZOELEH DU, is branched directly on the power of the true and good God. A constant clash between the two forces is the law of creation, death being the result.

(3)

HOW GA ONCE CAME TO DEINPLAY TOWN
IN BOOTUO CLAN, NIMBA COUNTY, AS
TOLD BY DAVID ZAGOU WANDAH

Ga was once seen in person by an old specially gifted man Gongor Kayee before his death in 1963.

This old man who was born with occult power saw a tall light complexioned man one afternoon entering Deinplay like a hunter attempting to overtake an animal. He had a long woven bag and a huge wooden ax-head in his hands. He made a vertical stop against a tree on the edge of the town and stared directly to the quarter where a man was sick. He then crept to his knees and crawled insidiously to the house of the sick man. He remained in concealment and peeped in from the rear of the house, then jumped in like a cat and smote the sick man with his big stick. He ran back with his bag shaking up and



down with the soul of the sick man. It was not too long when the sick man died. Old Gongor Kayee swore that if there had been another man so endowed with special power as himself, they could have on that day attacked Ga, destroyed him and there would be no more death on earth. No matter how serious is a sick man's condition, he would not die if not from the visit of Ga; also no matter how light and unimportant an illness, one will die if Ga approaches him. However Ga will be beaten if the sick is under the care of a powerful ZOELEH DU Medicine man. The command for the return of a soul by Klan cannot be hindered by any spells, he concluded.

METAPHYSICAL CONCEPTS OF THE DAN TRIBE
SOUL; SPIRIT; LIFE; BREATH; BODY; LIFE
BEYOND THE GRAVE AND GOD.

I. SOUL

Soul is Zuu the main factor of human creature which dwells and guides the activities of man. It can either depart from the body by the command of the Creator Klan or by KORGBIN DU.

II. SPIRIT

Spirit is Glebor the second name which the Zuu gets after it has departed the body or a reincarnated body

III. LIFE

Life is Nii, the strength that supports the survival of the body. Nii is composed of water.



IV. BREATH

Breath is Tirr the out-and-in source for the maintenance of life. Nii and Tirr cannot do without one another. The soul of a man can make a temporary departure from the body, and oftentimes with the knowledge of the person. In this connection, it is believed that the spirit can seek for a new incorporation into the unborn baby of the same family while the original man still exists. The man who is aware of the transaction will not touch such a baby whose birth ordains his own death. The former man will die shortly after the birth of the baby: this then is the permanent departure of the soul from the materialization because of the new abode. One of the components of Tirr is tirrsaa (air). The Tirr will no more exist when the permanent death occurs.

V. BODY

The body which is Bun is a house, the dust materialization of the four components discussed above.

VI. LIFE BEYOND THE GRAVE

Spirit is eternal and its materialization is only temporary. A fetish or a mask may be abandoned by its spirit and thus dies, the object becoming useless, worthless like a corpse. The spirit survives and may seek a new abode. In the case of man, his spirit, after an interval in GLEBOR-OR (the realm of the dead), is reincorporated in a child of the same family prior to the birth of the child.

God created the spirits. Working from this concept, the Dans try to link their different religious notions into varying systems. Today God still acts as a regulating power by annihilating after death the spirits of those who have indulged in witchcraft. A soul after death enters into the second world called Glebor-or with the ancestors from which it has emanated, or walk among the living in any form it likes such as trees, fishes, sculptures, wild and domestic animals, etc. If the soul is guilty of witchcraft is cast in a place known in the Dan's term as GLEYTIN-ANEBOR-OR where it is destroyed and vanished.

One form of GLEBOR is in the spiritual world where it is inspired for good or for evil. The other form is its incarnation in the body of man. There is complete identification of the two. It is why man can be punished in his body for crimes committed by his spirit. On the other hand, the spirit he carries within himself is taboo to his being; he could not destroy it without destroying himself; that is to say, if he leaves his natural body by magical means to do evil act, the original being suffers when his "Double" is affected. (See number three under the title: 17 WAYS OF DYING, THEIR CHARACTERISTICS AND NAMES, for the word DOUBLE.)

Another belief of the Dan tribe is that the spirit of a dead person can appear incarnate to a relative or friend after his death; he shows himself then disappears. Another belief is that the deceased's spirit may err in its personified form seeking for new environment, far from home and that he may decide to live there.

He may also, if he died far from home, decide to come back and live with his family as if nothing had happened to him. Only he will disappear to the sight of anyone who is informed of his death.

A story is told of Laytar, a witchcraft woman who died in Nyor Diaplay and was appearing every night, begging for food from almost every back door in the town. When she was asked on several instances to give her name, she would say "you the people of Diaplay are too inquisitive"! She talked between her teeth as it is believed it is the way all Glebors talk. An occult Zoe, old-man Menlee of the town dressed in his costumes one morning and went to her grave with some other Zoes to dig her tomb. He found her sitting up in the tomb making a rice basket. She begged for her soul but Menlee slew her with his spear; she died the second death and appeared no more.

VII. GOD

Not only the Dan Po-me (Dans), but many African tribes even where apparently there is no influence of Monotheism have a word for the High God. The Dan Po-me go farther than most: from Xlan to AA. AA is said to be Xlan's father. Xlan is described as a man with a long beard made of chains, and elders of the tribe often have their faces adorned with a long kinky beard as if to identify themselves with Xlan, being themselves the earthly mediators of their families.

Xlan has his seat at the Glebor Saanlee ba, the gate of the realm of the dead, and determines where each incoming soul should



go. He forbids entrance to those whose time has not expired: those subject to long spells of fainting or who "die" for a few hours to recover after.

The expression AA WEAH, KIR XLAN WEA, literally: "If Aa agrees, Xlan will agree" explains the hierarchy between Aa and Xlan and at the same time their unity of view and purpose.

The name Aa is employed in some idiomatic expressions, such as in the curse: AAIA PA: which is considered as one of the worse forms of cursing. When said by a mother to her wayward child, she at the same time slaps her laps (where the baby child used to lay at the time of feeding) as to curse out even that tender memory, then forces out of her breast a drop of milk. The curse is redeemed only by the mother spilling clear water on the ground mixing it with the earth's clay and dabbing the mixture on the child's forehead and heels. The ceremony is performed with a word of prayer to Xlan, through the libation.

AAIA WEH: is a spontaneous utterance when somebody considered as wicked has escaped a tragic accident. It literally means that "it would have been well done for Aa to let the accident happen.

In earlier time the end of every seven days was called SAKPADIR YEE (Slipper Man Day) or GROE YEE (Rest Day). It was the day which the Dans believe Aa disguised Himself in the form of an old helpless person, or a person with physical defects. It is said that the purpose for which Aa used to come down was to see that the day kept holy, to bless and test those who exercised

CHARITY AND MERCY in the way acceptable to God, and to impose punishment to those who disregard the poor and needy people and those who laugh at a person with physical defects. Aa was seen wearing wooden footwear. It is believed in this concept that a sudden silence occurring when a group of people are together in conversation means that God is passing in the area.

CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS RELATED TO DEATH

1. SYMBOLIC REINCARNATION CEREMONY

When a baby is born as the reincarnation of a deceased, if his name is not obtained in advance through dream or through a familiar person's revelation, he becomes sick. It is then for the parents to seek his real name among those of members of the family who passed away. This is done through a special ceremony. They break a dried round root of certain plant called BOLO into lumps and wrap the lumps in separate leave with rope. Each wrapping will be given a deceased's name from both the souls of the father and mother. The wrappings are placed in circle in a fanner. Each wrapping is watched by someone to remember the name it represents. The preparation is done in the absence of the mother and the baby. She is called when the fanner is set. She swings the baby in her arms over the fanner three or four times depending on its sex and then quickly reaches her right hand down and picks one of the wrappings. The wrapping she takes would determine the name of the baby.



2. DEATH OF A YOUNG BABY

Mourning for a young baby who dies under the age of one year is not allowed. It is for fear of encouraging the spirit of the deceased child to return to the same parents. Silence about its death will discourage the spirit not to return. Such a baby is not considered to be dead, but rather to have returned to the form of its pre-existence. With this ritual belief, the remains are buried by a special person at the rear of the town in a dumping site against the bush. It is said that a dumping site at the rear of the town is one of the main entrances that lead to the home of the dead or Glebor-or.

3. DEATH SIGNS

The Dan think that when somebody dies, a relative or friend may get sudden notice of the event, sometimes in a frightful manner. It may be a sound or a sign or feeling of a presence, even a vision. Dreams may be the way more currently used. One would dream of a friend covered with clay: it is a sure sign of his death. Or one would see oneself digging a tomb. A friend's voice calling from the void could also be a sign of his death, and if one's own name is called, to answer may mean death.

4. GA KUU (PREMONITION)

In Dan country as elsewhere, premonition of death or accident is often discussed with strong conviction. An oppressive feeling, the missing of a heart beat, anguish and heaviness of heart are interpreted as premonition of disaster, accidents; injuries without just and legitimate causes are viewed in the same line:



some invisible spirit is at work, possibly coming from a relative of whom demise is still unknown. The anguish and oppression caused by Ga KUU can be of such intensity that in some cases a fatal issue can result, such as misfortune in business, serious injury, and sometimes getting involved in criminal offenses.

5. RULES TO ANNOUNCE DEATH

It is considered wrong to unduly delay or suppress notice of relative's death, but it is also considered improper to be rude or casual in the announcement. The person making the announcement is expected to be strongly in sympathy with the bereaved, he is expected to ~~weep~~ with him for few minutes and then stop to comfort him.

Time is considered very important; if possible it will be in the early morning, the announcer drawing close to the bereaved and using most likely one of the following expressions:

1. A bon ya kan. He has been disregarded.
2. A won ya siyay. His case has been damaged.
3. A gu ya siyay. He has been disappointed.
4. A won ya zir kplaa. His matter has been biased.
5. A ba peeyay ten-an siyay. The law of his iron bracelet (protective talisman) has been violated.
6. A ba n'lan ya kir gbay. His sun has become hot.
7. A gor-a go n'lan gor. His head is no longer supporting the sun.
8. A gor-a go go-ula. His head is off the headrest.



9. A ba yor-a ya kir gbay. His sickness has become severe.
10. A ba yiya lo. His time has reached.
11. A won ya kir. His matter is done.
12. A zo ya doan. His thought has ceased..
13. A to ya pa seh-a. His ear has touched the earth.
14. Xlan yaa su. God has taken him.
15. Xlan yaa kun. He has been received by God.
16. Xlan yaa lor-or kir. He has been called by God.
17. Xlan yaa zir kor-a. He has been smitten by God.
18. Ya lo bin peeyay. He has gone to the shade.
19. Yalo su peeyay. He has gone to the moon.
20. Yailo zinya gben-en peeyay. He has gone to a long distance.
21. Ya puwo. He has fallen.
22. Ya go kwa peeyay. He has left us.
23. Ya baye to. He has refused "dumboy"(cassava dough food).
24. Ya tuo tan. He has laid down the trumpet.
25. Ya di tan. He has laid down the spear. (Death of a warrior).
26. Ya luo nyian. He has laid aside the raffia skirt.
(Death of a mask Zoe).
27. Yaa le gbor. He is no more.
28. Yaa po-o gbor. He is no longer in town.
29. Yaa kwa peeyay gbor. He is no longer with us.

It is impolite and uncultural to say "ya ga" (he is dead) for the death of any human being. The only exception to this custom could be the case of Nonleh death discussion. (Consult 5th paragraph in the subtitle N'NUU SAAN SI (HUMOROUS DEATH DRAMA)).



17 WAYS OF DYING, THEIR CHARACTERISTICS AND NAMES

1. SEHEHLA GA. Death in bed. Natural death after normal illness.

2. TOWUGI GA. Death in animal. Death of a person believed to have been killed while in the form of an animal.

3. KWI KOR-A GA. Death by a fetish. Death when the DOUBLE+ of a man has been killed by the power of fetish.

4. NMEN-ME KOR-A GA. Death by Zoeleh Du. Death caused by Zoeleh Du when the double of the deceased has been killed by a specially gifted man endowed with Zoeleh Du.

5. BLEE KOZIR ME-AN GA. (Literally: death by the forest battle). Tragic death in the forest. This is when a man has been either killed by an animal in the forest or accidentally by another hunter with gun, spear, arrow, trap, or any other means while hunting or travelling in the forest.

6. PEEYAY KOR-A GA. Death by iron weapon. Peeyay kor-a ga is death caused intentionally or accidentally by deadly weapon, or by suicide with weapon.

+ A double is a duplicate manifestation (or appearance) of a human being otherwise active or at rest in a place close or far away. Immaterial in nature, the double may be seen or even communicated, but it takes superior spiritual power to harm or destroy him. It can be harmed and destroyed if it is hit with any object from the hand of an ordinary man.



7. SEEYAY KOR-A GA. Death by fire.

8. IYI KOR-A GA. Death by drowning.

If the body of a drowned man could not be found, a banana or plantain plant is cut with its leaves on and thrown into the water on the spot where the person was drowned; and it is said that the plant would float down the water by the power of the current - where the current places the plant, the body would be found.

9. GRU GA. Death at war.

10. TOYIA GA. Death at sleep. This is death when a man dies in his sleep.

11. PIRDA MEJOR PIRPEEYAY GA. Death by poison. This is death when the deceased died from poisoned food.

12. MORN GA. Death caused by a Moslem diviner. This is instant death when the soul of the deceased has been killed by the diviner through KORGBIN DU on order of an enemy. Such a death could be through brief sickness, lightening, etc.

13. TO LONENUAN GRUA GA. Death at childbirth. This is death when a woman dies at childbirth. The burial is done far away from the graveyard in order to keep away the misfortune. This applies also to the death of a person killed by fetish; he is buried in the swamp to cause the KORGBIN DU vested in him to be absorbed so that his rebirth may be carried without evil. In the case of a mask Zoe, he is buried with green leaves in the forest, not the graveyard, because mask or Gle is said to have derived from the forest. The remains of a Dehbor-me (diviner) were not buried in former days, they were simply placed in the



huge root-pocket of a silk cotton tree in the special burial site reserved for them in the forest.

14. LEAYA KOR-A GA. Death by transformation. Death when a man transforms himself or is transformed by Aa's curse or by a diviner's charm into tree, stone, beast, etc. before the eyes of people.

15. TOOBOR GA. Death by spell. This is death when a man has been enchanted; he suffers a spell and roams about for a time and then dies.

16. DUKPOR ME-AN GA. Death by witchery. This ^{is} death when a man dies from sickness for being witched.

17. LORN GA. Death by disappearing. This is death when a man disappears never to be located again.

7. DEATH DESCRIPTIONS

There ^{are} also four distinct death descriptions that show four different kinds of death. Below are the four manners of death:

(1) DEYTII GA. Death unknown to the deceased. This is death without being sick or when the victim was not risking his life with conscience.

(2) YIALASU or TO LAULUWOSU. Yialasu means breaking off from the top, and To lauluwosu is remaining in public performing ground. This is death of a young ambitious man who had newly entered into life. (a) If the shoot of a young plant breaks off from the top, the growth is hindered. (b) A man who remained in an arena is the young man who died while in action.

(3) IYIKAN ME PEH-A GA. (Literally: death by awaking someone from his sleep). This is the death by poisoning, murdering,



or any instant death that stops the deceased from completing his plans in life.

(4) YEZINYASU. (Literally: stepping on the road). The death of an old person is said to be natural without pain as if simply stepping from this world to the road to Glebor-or. Another form of Yezinyasu is when a man goes to Glebor-or in his natural form without dying.

A recent story is told of an old man from Boehlay town in Boottuo clan, Zoe Dan Chiefdom, who dived into a sacred pool and never returned. He told his people earlier that there was a town under the pool where their ancestors live. He was accompanied by a large crowd from the town to the pool. He dived and stayed over night while the people waited. He came forth from the water in the morning, wearing dried clothes. He told his people that a place had been prepared for him, and he was going for good, they must not wait for him anymore. He gave them the cow skin he used for sitting, he dived and never returned.

It is also said that in earlier days people ascended to heaven in brass buckets TEH-A, sent down from heaven in long chains before the houses of men who had previously predicted to their people the manner in which they would die.

In spite of the various manners of death discussed so far, it is said that prior to the birth of every child, his soul had an interview with God. The interview featured around three main questions given by God: (1) the life he would like to live on earth, (2) the age he would prefer to return to Glebor-or, and (3) the manner of death he would wish to die. Each answer is granted and recorded by Xlan.

The Dan concepts of death greatly blame those who make coffins for sale and the commercial grave diggers who dig up many graves for no dead but with evil intent for someone to die. The culture therefore holds them responsible for the increase of death rate in our time. "Death should not be encouraged to come to us by making preparation for its arrival. If death was to be welcomed, God would reveal to us the time, day, and year of each person's

death," one of my informants remarked. "In fact, God apparently does not pay much attention to us these days in time of illness and other death potentials because we feel we have advanced in" civilisation by turning our culture up side down - now, imagine for yourself; how God can help a sick man or a victim of motor accident who may be at the point of death, when a grave digger and caskets sellers are asking God to be with them in their businesses? These people really encourage death to come to our homes every day," he concluded. In answering a question which Woboa Tabmengbe asked him, he said the followings:

1. Exposing of corpse to the teen-agers may cause some of them to grow up with misfortunes and bad spells.

2. Modern wake keeping is like a party, many go there for alcoholic drinks without any apparent sign of sorrow.

(see Dan burial).

The discussion continued when a young man by the name of Lorsir Bartuahgbe from Gbehi Bonelah town within Gbeh-le Chiefdom added by saying that some people are even dying these days without the knowledge of God, and that when one of them is seen by God in the realm of the dead, he would ask: "Oh! What time you came here, my child?" "Over a week, my Lord," "But your time has not expired yet," Xlan would remark. "Well, Oldman, let it be so; I have already reached. You see, the modern people have destroyed everything pertaining to culture: there is no more full thought on your laws and the rules which control time element for death. When one attempts to talk, they say he is talking about primitive culture. Death to them is like a toy or pet. This is why many of us are arriving here before our time," the dead would conclude.

8. DEATH JUDGEMENTS

The fixed penalty for the life of a man was four cows, four sheep, and four goats; and three of the above mentioned domestic animals for a woman. If a man kills another man by accident, the criminal and his family were approached by the deceased's people through customary law procedure for the collection of the fines mentioned above. The charge for this type of killing is called KORRBO ME KOR-ASU.

In the case where a man killed another intentionally, the family of the deceased will seek revenge by killing the murderer or any relative of the criminal unless an immediate intervention for peace is made by the culprit's family. In this connection, there was not any fixed fines in exchange of the murderer's life; any claims by the deceased's relatives were liable of payment. Fixed penalty for intentional killing was death in the manner in which the deceased was killed. The charge is called ZORR KIR-U or ME ZIR-U. Anything that is done to a man to cause his life is either Korrbø Me Kor-asu or Zorr Kir-u, not only with deadly weapon.

If a wife deserted her husband's home and died while living with her parents, the parents are responsible for her burial and are supposed to refund her dowry money to the husband.

If a man estranged another man's wife, and she dies while living illegally with him, the lover was responsible for her burial and is supposed to refund her dowry to the husband.

Should a man cause pregnancy to another man's wife and she dies during pregnancy or at childbirth, he was responsible for her burial and is supposed to pay amount of money demanded by the husband. The same customary law applies to a man who sexually harms the mother of a young because of the waning and the child consequently dies.

When a dowried daughter dies while with her husband, the parents would approach the widower and his people to make the last traditional payment of dowry for their deceased daughter. Instead of mentioning the name of dowry payment, they would say:

"We have come to you and your people to prepare for us our BAYE." The expression is understood by all the Dans that it stands for final dowry payment of a deceased's wife. (Baye is dough which is made from cassava root and it is swallowed in lumps with meat soup. There are three other common names for the Baye in Liberia, they are: "gekpa," "dumboy," and "fufu". Baye is one of the staple food in Liberia). When this final marriage settlement has been made, the parents of the deceased wife go to their home and return no more for dowry money. If the husband was good to the first deceased wife he may be allowed to marry another wife from the same family.

9. DEATH GREETINGS AND CONDOLENCES (their forms and circumstances)

In the Dan custom, a sympathizer would approach a bereaved person with his body bending and politely extends his two hands to the bereaved who stretches his arms in response; palms reach to shoulders and so they remain one brief moment in a kind of loose swaying embrace. The sympathizer says: "U yayee sehn-on U yayee sehn (congratulation for seeing you, congratulation for seeing you). This means that he is happy in sharing sorrow with him to see that he lives to carry on the family name. Or he may say: "Ba bua, ba boowo saa" (good morning, now good morning). These expressions are used in a solemn manner. The embrace is disconnected after the second sentence.

10. OF GHOSTS (GLEBORS)

The Glebors are said to move about or display their belongings on the face of the earth when the sun is on top of head. Due to this belief a Dan man would not travel and move around on paths and open places from about twelve to two in the afternoon when the sun is bright during those hours. Parents do their best to keep their children indoors when that time of the day is approaching. The time of the day when the sun is too hot is called N'LAN VLANKANSU. Another name for the time of the day is TOAKOR-U GA N'LAN. The literal meaning for the latter is domestic animals' weakening sun. All cattles are

weak during this period of hot sun and rest. The dead will return home with their children and belongings when the day is cool, and begin searching food at about six o'clock in the evening. This then is the best time for offering sacrifices to them. The offering are done to the tombs, on the paths, before a house, to sacred water (YIGBAU), and sacred bush (BLEEGBAU).

11. RESEARCH OF FERTILITY AS CONNECTED WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE DEAD

A barren woman who wants to have a child would in the evening make an offering to the sacred pool or bush in her own town. It is believed that the spirits of the dead dwell in those special places. After the sacrifice is made with words of prayer to Xlan through the ancestors, she picks up an object from the water or the bush and places it on her back like a baby and carries it into town to be presented to her husband. The husband accepts the artificial child from her and congratulates her for the birth. Since it is also believed that the children under the age of five could see Glebors and have the moral and magical fellowship with them, the barren woman can apply for child through them by making a feast for them. If a child picks up any object during the feast and give it to her, she would have the child; but if the children just disperse after the feast without handling her anything, she would not bear children in her life or something wrong in her life must be corrected before she has motive for such a feast, it is said that the food which is intentionally put on the floor by a child while eating is the share of his or her Glebor that guides him from danger and injury.

N'NUU SAANSU (HUMOROUS DEATH DRAMA)

N'nuu Saansu is the folkloric comical drama performed by the married women in the community for the death of a N'NUU. A N'nuu is one's daughter in the town; she could be the mother of one of the women's husband, his sister or daughter. The three days dramatic festival is featured to put the community in a gay and receptive mood as usual and for the bereaved family to efface their sorrow. It also indicates the last respect for the N'nuu who is considered the most important personality in the community. (A virgin was planted alive in the primitive days in the center)

of a Dan town with DEH (divining) fetish in the dug-up pit vertically by a Dehborme (diviner) for fertility and protection for the town against death and trouble. She was planted with a young silk cotton tree).

Some of the N'nuu Saansu actresses dress in comical costumes and paint their faces with red, black and white earth clay in funny way to make people laugh. They imitate the humorous sound of speech and behavior of the deceased and other people. They would jump in the midst of weeping people and pretend to lament with them; instead of mourning properly they would imitate their weeping and make faces at them so that they stop weeping. The performance is accompanied by singing and dancing. They employ cow horn as musical instrument.

A feast in which some domestic animals are slaughtered is made by the relatives of the deceased N'nuu for the women at the end of the three days. They also make a special contribution to the women to put away their ritual cow horn which they used by blowing during their drama.

A married woman who remains in her married home and becomes old is regarded as a N'nuu and is treated like manner after her death.

There exists a kind of strong joke tide between husband and wife on the death of their relatives, most especially, their parents. The joke is called NONLEH and it includes other humors. Nonleh is exchanged between their relatives too. Literally, Nonleh is an obstacle. Figuratively, as understood between in-laws, it is an unwritten law of prohibition applying to anger, ill-will and other irate dispositions. Its neat result between relatives and in-laws is forbearance and tolerance. Nonleh then is the law applying to family circle each one being a NON to the others.

According to Dan tradition, it is wrong to sue one's father or mother-in-law, or their relatives while the marriage still exists. The custom obligates as well the in-laws and their kin toward their new relatives. The two sides being so kept within bond, they take advantages of the situation by making jokes and teasing such as would bring trouble between unrelative parties, but are exchanged in good spirit between in-laws. Daughters, sons, old folks, have to bear sometimes against their repressed

anger, Nonleh binding them to smile, and should they be really hurt, to try and find stronger Nonleh words in the same apparent teasing mood. However, Nonleh may end in fighting with no body being investigated except if one party would bear the attack without fighting back. The Non who brings the fight is liable to be fined by the elders.

DAN BURIAL

A dead body is believed to be sacred and horrid, and therefore should be handled by old people only. It is not exposed to public view except beside the burial site. It should not be approached and seen by children and pregnant women. However, a pregnant widow may approach her husband corpse provided she is tied with a rope around her neck to appear ^{like} a prisoner so that Ga would overlook her. It is said, a pregnant woman is death prisoner, for she stands between death and life, and she is only released after safe delivery. Children are restricted from viewing a corpse for fear of convulsion as it is believed that children can easily communicate with the dead and possibly get into spasm. Because a pregnant woman bears dual souls, she should not have any contact with a dead body for fear of wrong reincarnation or for the belief that the unborn baby may have evil magical communication with the dead. A person born through the prediction of a diviner cannot view a corpse. He is called SUDEHINIRN. (Literally: child received through a diviner). The hair of such a child is not cut, not until he grows and say for himself "I need a hair cut."

It is against the Dan funeral rite to make a wound on a corpse or to take any part of it except in case of death by dropsy or if a woman conceived with baby dies before delivering. Such cases require the services of a special BONZIR ZOE (surgical Zoe) who should also be a MENKUNPLAN ZOE (a zoe endowed with many Zoelh Du). He would slit open the dead to make his stomach appear normal after the remains have been committed to the grave. It would be the last part of the ceremony, and the Zoe acts alone. In the case of the pregnant woman the Zoe would extract the baby to liberate the mother of her ^{burden} ~~burden~~. This ceremony is also performed alone after the remains have been placed in the open

grave. In both cases, the reason for such operation is connected with the philosophy relating to re-birth of the soul after death. The operations are performed to prevent misfortunes to the deceased in their future states of living.

The common Dan burial custom is that the remains of the deceased are carried to the grave wrapped in the mat in which he has died and with the clothes in which he was sick.

Corpse carriers and grave diggers use green leaves around their waists against misfortune and for purification. Two diggers ^{are} usually necessary for the actual burial; they stand inside the dug-up grave at each end and receive the corpse from above. The body is buried with head westward and is laid on the left side.

Every person present at the grave is supposed to take some dirt and throw it in the grave before it is filled up. Other mats, clothes, and some personal belongings of the deceased may be also placed in the grave with the body and covered with dirt; some may be placed on the closed tomb. Deadly weapons and a long piece of cassava stem may also be buried with the dead, if the death was sudden or of a suspicious character. It is believed that the dead would use the cassava stem and the weapons to beat and kill the person that has caused his death.

All the medicines and herbs that were used to heal the deceased are thrown away into the bush. The grave diggers are allowed to take portion of gifts that are presented at the burial in honor of the dead for their service.

The final shape of the Dan tomb is a mound gradually tapering down at its extremities. Inside measurement of a grave is determined according to the size of the deceased, the depth being about five to six feet.

Any derogatory statement against the deceased or members of the bereaved family at burial time is a cultural and ritual crime. Smiling is forbidden.

Female comforters usually hold firm the weeping women and male comforters help the men. It is thought that otherwise they might hurt themselves, even commit suicide. Sorrow is said to be

at its peak when a bereaved holds another bereaved for mutual comfort at the burial.; an emotional outburst of sorrow may cause them to separate abruptly and possibly injured themselves. Indoor at wake, relatives usually embrace one another while they sit weeping among comforters.

There are special musicians of the tribe who are usually employed to sing dirges over the dead or sing during the funeral ceremonies. "AAN GLE SUBOE" is the unique solem song which is sung while carrying a corpse to the grave. The song is reserved for that purpose only and it is never used on any other occasion. A dead body is called GBAN, GLE, or GLEKPEH; kpeh means a fallen tree.

From the burial ground the diggers go first with all the tools which they used for digging to a nearby stream to clean themselves and the tools before entering their houses. A running stream is said to wash away all misfortunes, impurities, and sins.

A gift that is presented to a bereaved after burial is called YIDORBEN-AN. (Literally: placing water on the lips.) It simply means that the bereaved may overlook his sorrow, stop fasting, and eat. Such a gift is expected by the bereaved from all his true friends and in-laws.

When death occurs newly in a house, the women of the community are expected to keep the stricken family supplied with food until the mourning women are free to attend again to their household works.

The burial scene of a barren woman is usually sorrowful. Her corpse is abused and mocked, and she is buried with a live charcoal plunged into her body through the sex that failed to reproduce. The only exception could be in the case where the husband has other wives or wife whom he dowried through the influence and assistance of the deceased barren wife, and those wives have issues for them - she is considered the mother of the children.

Reproduction and fame are said to be the essential factors of life before death. For a man to die without one of the two essentialities, his death would be considered as an exter-

mination from the earth. One of the Dan popular themes in singing is: "KE N TOR BOR N DE A GAEN YOUIR!" (Literally: if my name becomes famous and myself die, then it is it.)

(For more information on the Dan funeral rite, consult the subtitle "Tabmen's burial.")

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE LIVING AND THE DEAD ON
EARTH AND THE REALM OF THE DEAD
AND THE CONCEPT OF HEAVEN AND THE HOME OF THE DEAD

1

GLEBOR-ORLEH or GLEBOR-OR (note the or after hyphen) is the realm of the dead, infinite, invisible, with no precise location except that it is yonder. GLEBOR (with one or) is a dead person's spirit. It may be beneficial or harmful, depending of the personality of the dead and of circumstances.

There is no distance from earth to Glebor-or. The moment a man dies, the next thing he notices is he has entered into a strange enviroment with strange people and strange views. besides death, Glebor-or would become visible to a living person through dream and vision. The belief is that a living person may communicate with spirits of the dead either in Glebor-or in his dream or on earth after he has received the secret of that particular dead spirit from the dream. Talismanic power can also be acquired from a Glebor through dream where the dreamer is instructed by the Glebor in the use of certain talismans, and where and how to find them. The talisman or genius could be embodied into an object, or a living creature through which the genius acts; it may be visible only to its owner. The dreamer would awake from his sleep and find the talisman at the place indicated to him in the dream. This form of receiving genius carries a risk to life for the fact that some spirits are evil; touching them in an inanimate object or a living creature could result if not in death at least in a dreadful spell such as weigh on some people who can be seen dissheveled and in rags in the streets, and in the villages. The worse form of these genii to get in contact with could be the DRAGON SNAKE (NMEN VA) in

actual or figurative form; the second worse could be Glebor, a dead person's spirit. LORSEN which is another name for Nmen Va, demands from its master human food; the failure on the part of the owner to provide the human provision may result in death of the master himself. The symptom for the demand of the human food is a sudden illness or spell; the victim would be released after the food is supplied or when a prompt confession is made and the secret one is exposed. All that the master has to do to supply the human requirement is to simply give a name of any person to the BOR-ALIR (genius); the killing is done by the Bor-alir through magic.

We have said that LORSEN could be in actual or figurative form. In actual form, a sorcerer may keep and raise a monstrous serpent. In figurative form, somebody may dream of a ring, of a rope, of any snake-like object and it is an advice to him to avoid contact with all things which figure LORSEN and are of ill omen. The law of every Bor-alir, whether good or bad, is its utmost secrecy. Only secrecy protects it and gives it strength. Should the name of the talisman or of the guiding spirit behind the object be pronounced even accidentally for the owner to hear, all power is drained out of the object, and if the talisman is a living creature, it just disappears. Such talismans are supposed to be strong vigilant protectors. Dans believe in them and all powerful men like chiefs, famous artisans, good hunters, wrestlers, and prosperous persons are supposed to have secret one. The literal meaning of Bor-alir is "revealed to one in vision". No victim of sudden death without being sick or injured was buried in the former days except when decomposition had started. The reason was that the Dans claim they have witnessed in many instances where persons were directed in their dreams to touch some items which would cause apparent death and their trip to Glebor-or to receive special "Medicine", after what they would come back to life. So if a dead was buried shortly after his death, it might be difficult for him to return to earth after his visit to Glebor-or.

RESURRECTION

Woboa heard once his father lecture to some young men in Nyor Diaplay town, warning them to love women but not to the extent of revealing their secrets to them; and he told the story of what a wife once did to her husband to prevent his resurrection.

That man woke up one night and told his wife that he was going to die in the morning, but would come back to life the next day. He warned her severely not to allow people to bury him. He exposed that he was going to Glebor-or for a powerful "Medicine". No ordinary earthly power, no deadly weapons, or poison would harm him when in possession of the "Medicine". She herself would become a rich and famous wife in the Dan country if she would only keep the secret and delay the burial. He did not mention the news to his own parents and relatives.

On the next day the husband was found dead to the sorrow of his entire family. The elders decided to have his remains bathed in the evening by a left handed man to find out the cause of his death. The elders warned the deceased's wife, parents and other relatives to keep away from the corpse. The deceased's wife who had already passed the news to her lover whom she had long planned to marry, stood up at the gathering and begged the elders to bury the body the ~~same~~ day, or else a plague would settle on the community. She knew it for certain by revelation, and the husband himself had appeared to say: "Bury me quick." The elders and relatives believed her, since she was the wife of the deceased and mother of his many sons: the husband was buried.

The Glebors made the "Medicine" for the man and sent him back to Kpo-n la (earth) on the following day. When he woke up, he found himself in dirt. He struggled to rise up, but he couldn't. Then the power of his "Medicine" came upon him and he rose from the grave with force.

To the wonder and terror of his people, most especially his wife and her lover, they saw him entering the town; they all fled. He passed through the town to the river with all the things he was buried with, took his bath and washed his burial clothes. He returned to town and went to his house while

some elders stood far off and watched his movement. He dressed in his clean clothes and called the people to draw near to him before his house, he told them he was not a Glebor (spirit of the dead). The people were convinced only after they had visited his tomb and saw that it had been opened, and was empty. He narrated the whole story and eventually drove his wife from the town to her parents and killed the lover.

A RETURN TRIP FROM GLEBOR-OR TO KPO-N LA

The author was told of another dealing between the people of Glebor-or and those on earth, when a man who was indebted to his friend in Glebor-or was chased by two Glebor-or messengers who arrived on Kpo-n la (earth) like ordinary men and arrested the debtor who had run away to earth in the form of a baby through a pregnant woman to escape his debt. This incident is said to have occurred in a Dan town in 1945 A.D. The woman who was pregnant for only six months delivered by rush reincarnation.

The parents of the baby were sitting outdoor by their new born baby when the messengers arrived and walked directly to their house where the baby was lying down in the sun on a mat. They shouted at the baby to get up; when he was not getting up, and was acting like a baby, the two messengers started whipping him. The mother grabbed the baby while the father reached for his gun, the whipping was so severe that the so called baby could not bear. To the people's utmost astonishment, they saw that the tiny baby had changed into a grown up man, running toward the grave yard. The two messengers ran after him, and the three disappeared.

RETURN TRIP FROM EARTH TO GLEBOR-OR

Rumor circulated here recently among the Liberian Dans concerning a young Dan man from Ivory Coast who told his people that he had been to Glebor-or upon the invitation of a Glebor-or chief, and testified in a case which was existing between his dead mother and another dead woman.

According to the story, the two women were married to one man prior to their death. Each of them had a son by their husband. The mother of the young man who told this story dowried a wife for her son before she died. The story continued that the two women, the young man's wife, and one of the sons whose mother did not get him a wife, died. While they were in Glebor-or, the dead son's mother influenced him to keep his half brother's wife (the dead girl) without consulting her friend who paid dowry for the girl. The dead mother of the young man who told this story contented and sued her friend to their Glebor-or chief. The defendant who gave the girl to her son alledged during the investigation, that the dowry of the girl now in question was paid by their husband, not by her friend as she claimed. Both parties named the plaintiff's living son as a witness after the girl had testified in favour of the living son's mother, the mother, whose son was still living on earth promised to bring her son in court the following morning.

Her son had just arrived in the evening in his farm village from hunting, resting to go to town. When he got up to leave, he heard his dead mother's voice, calling him from a nearby plantain plantation where he had dumped some garbage. He recognized her voice, but was very much afraid to answer. The voice came closer and closer, and when he looked, he saw two "kpankpos" (cone-shaped kneaded earth) on a green "nonleh" leaf. The voice instructed him to spit in his left hand and ^{stir} one of the "kpankpos in the salava and rub it across his face - she directed him to administer the rubbing with the first "kpankpo" on his right and reserve the other for his return to earth.

He did as he was told and his mother appeared to him visible. He trembled, but his mother spoke to him in tears not to be afraid. She promised him fullest protection in Glebor-or and his safe return to his father on earth after she had explained the purpose of her trip to earth. The young man consented to go with his mother to Glebor-or regardless of any danger. She collected some food stuffs from her son's farm village and told him the food was for him to eat in the spirit world (Glebor-or). She advised very strongly that if a living man visits the home of the dead and eats their food, enters their houses, and shakes their hands cannot return to Kponla (earth). She informed her son he would spend the night with her under the eave of her Glebor-or house.

At about ten O'clock in the morning he was led to the palaver hut (tribal court house) by his mother as the people gazed at them. They entered the court with great excitement and applause. He stood in the center of the court and testified in favour of his mother, and his mother won the case. The chief thus turned his young wife over to his dead mother. The woman who lost the case and her son left the court house weeping as her son blamed her for not getting a wife for him while they were on earth. There was a problem which developed for the mother - her son's dead wife begged her legal husband to stay or follow him to the earth and the young man groaned in confusion. The happy woman who was dancing and being embraced by her friends for winning the woman case became disturbed after she had discovered what was going on between the dead girl and her son. She rushed to the

scene and began to talk to them. She admitted how the dead wife was right in her requests and explained to the girl that her son was not yet dead to stay with them with his earthly body without the knowledge of Xlan and that it was impossible in her other request to return to Kponla (earth) in her spiritual appearance to live with the people who knew that she was dead. She encouraged her to bear patience until the day her son would come at proper time to stay for ever; the young girl knodded her head in tears. The mother left the poor disappointed wife in tears and led her son to the outskirts of the Gleber-or town through the deads' dumping site. Her son used the last "kpankpo" as directed by his mother into his eyes and found himself back on his farm village where he was collected by his dead mother.

While he was in the spirit world, the people from his town and clan were searching for him all over, ~~for~~ the bush, deep rivers, and towns. They thought he had been devoured by some wild beasts or confined magically in the forest by the sinister witch practitioners. He picked up his gun and the hunting sword and went to town and arrived among large wandering crowds to whom he narrated this wonderful story. An elaborate ceremonial cow feast was made in his honor by his town chief, elders, and his own relatives.

NAANLUO (HEAVEN)

Heaven is an endless large (Kingdom) Bor-useh where the Vital Force Klan lives with His messengers and Lanzirnu (elders). Naanluo Leh (Leh-Place) is linked with Glebor-or Leh. Klan is the Bor-ume (ruler) for both heaven and the realm of the dead. In the case of earth, God has dual control, God and man. Man also has dual ownership, God and Du. There is life in heaven and the realm of the dead; but no life exists in Gletin-anebor-or where the witchcrafts and cursed sinners are sent by Klan. The Dans claim that some living men had ascended heaven and returned to earth. Some managed it by vision, and one Taan Baawree from Tanway village ascended once to heaven by God's special invitation.

According to Hawon, Zagou wandah and many informants, Taan Baawree from Paalaa quarter in Tanway village, Buutuo Clan, Nimba County was once invited to heaven on two different occasions to settle some disputes. Taan Baawree was the famous prudent judge in the Dan country.

There were two rich men in heaven who had a feud over a calf. The men owned many cows, two of them, one for each man were so friendly that they would not do without one another; they grazed and slept together. The two cows had a calf each. Due to the friendly relationship between the cows, their owners did not care to know which calf belonged to which. Trouble came when one of the calves died.

A servant of one of the chiefs advised his master to tie the calf before his house to assert his possession. While the servant was so talking, a servant of the other chief heard him and rushing to his master told him what he had heard.

The two men fighting over the calf exchanged bitter words. The elders in heaven intervened, took the calf away but were unable to make a decision. In fact both cows were mooing for the lost calf. God who is believed to live in the upper part of heaven, sent word to the elders to fetch one Taan Baawree from Tanway town to settle the matter. The elders followed God's order and sent down a brass vessel with two messengers on a long chain. The messengers stopped before Baawree's house and delivered their message, but the elders of Tanway afraid of the occurrence advised Taan Baawree to stay, for fear that he would not return. Baawree told his people that he would go even if not to return because it was a unique experience for his town and even for the whole earth. He got in the vessel with the messengers and they ascended to heaven.

After Taan Baawree had heard the whole story on the two cows and the lost calf, he asked the elders to tie the two mothers far apart in one straight line where everybody could see. He had previously instructed them to put the calf in an enclosed house to spend one night there alone. Each time it bleated the mother fought to loose her ropes. Taan Baawree ordered the elders to let the calf out to seek for its mother. The calf ran out and bleated and the struggling cow responded. It ran past the first cow and started sucking from the other one, the real mother who then stopped struggling and began to lick the calf's body. Taan Baawree ruled that the chief who owned the cow from which the calf sucked must have the calf. The impressive decision was accepted by all, even the chief who lost the case embraced the judge and presented him with gifts. Judge Baawree returned to earth in the brass vessel with many gifts he received for his wise judgement.

Few years after the event, so continue the story, Taan Baawree woke up one morning in his Tanway town and saw two men in the same type of vessel in which he once travelled to heaven, standing before his house. The men explained as the purpose of their mission to him that they had been sent by the Heaven's elders to bring him for another judgement between two wives.

The men told Baawree that the two women had been living very friendly together in one house with their husband. They delivered one day with a boy child each. The babies were so much alike that only their parents could tell the difference. The two mothers exchanged breast feeding for the two babies. It happened one day while the two mothers were absent from their home that a monster came, took one of the babies into the forest and the child was seen no more. When they returned home in the evening; and could not find one of their babies, the women started to fight over the one baby. The case had been made more complicated for the fact that the husband who knew the difference between the babies could not tell which mother had lost her child would not talk for fear of more trouble to come from the irate bereaved mother. "This is why we have been sent to you, as you see the case is like the previous one you decided but it involves loss of a human being's life." Taan Baawree told the men that they should not worry, the case was simple to solve, and again he ascended with them.

Taan Baawree called the two women and asked them to say who the living baby belonged to. Each woman claimed the baby. Judge Baawree turned to the elders and asked them to send for a brave warrior to come with a keen sword. The warrior appeared with his sword. Taan Baawree told the two wives that the best solution was to kill the child and throw the body into the bush where the other child had been carried;

so they would be free to renew the friendship that once existed between them. One of them accepted the decision and said that God would give her another child. The other wife took very strong exception to the ruling, asking Baawree to let her friend have the baby; she would not let her child to be killed like meat. She said that since they two were the wives of one man, living in one house, she would still see her baby. The woman who had agreed to the killing objected saying that she would not accept the baby although she knew it was hers, because should it lives, the dispute would have no end; then Judge Baawree ordered the warrior to kill the child. As the warrior placed the baby's neck on a mortar to cut its throat, the wife who had protested against the sacrifice rushed forward and kneeling before the warrior pleaded to be killed first and the child after; she wept the whole while. Her tears dripped over the baby. Baawree declared that the child be liberated and be given to the weeping woman who had resisted the killing throughout the trial. Said he: "The baby is hers." The elders, the husband, and all who heard the judgement were satisfied with the ruling; they applauded Taan Baawree for his exceptional wisdom. Judge Taan Baawree returned to earth with more wealths from heaven.

There exists a saying among the Dans on Taan Baawree that goes like this: "N'nen nyen kir poee Taan Baawree ka e za dor Naa-an luoeh , a ba nyehn kir n'na-en." (Literally: if you could even be the Taan Baawree who judged in heaven, what should you have done?

Mr. Mawon Barplaye, one of the descendants, a famous Dan Herbalist in Monrovia, said that there is a special sacred cult of antiquities in Tanway town. The Temple is built with special architectural designs outside the town in the high forest and is guarded by one Kpantee. No European and Western products and

dreesses are allowed to enter the zone of the cult. Mawon believes that among the pieces kept in the temple are some of the artifacts brought back from heaven by Taan Baawree. He also mentioned Bochlai and Be-ntuo villages as other important places of sacred antiquities where he claims that there is possibility of finding some of Baawree's heavenly objects.

VISION THAT LED TO HEAVEN

The author remembers the story of pre-existence his late father Tabnen told as a lesson to a man in Nyor Diaplay town when that man complained, and was worrying that his own brothers and sisters hated him for being successful in life. Tabnen said that there was a chief who had seven brothers and sisters. Among them only one sister treated him as a brother, the rest did not like him. They opposed the chief with the outsiders and envied his success.

The chief could hardly sleep at night while pondering over the behavior of his brothers and sisters. He was so extremely worried that he eventually decided to commit suicide. He did not even care to pay attention to the advice his head wife was giving him that if he would be a fool to kill himself his good sister and children would suffer by the hands of their evil relatives. All of a sudden he had a vision in which he was taken to heaven.

God placed a seat in the center street of the heavenly city and asked him to sit in and wait for his brothers and sisters. God informed him that He would cause all his sisters and brothers to die on earth so that their spirits would appear in heaven. Xlan explained that although they would die, no one would bury them, for He would send them back to earth immediately after He had taught him the lesson He wanted him to know. The chief sat and watched with anxiety.

One of his brothers entered heaven through the center street. He stopped by XLAN " BA ZADOR GON-ON VA PIE" the large Council Shelter where God was surrounded by His elders, he saluted them and passed on without speaking to his brother, the chief. Xlan asked the chief if his brother spoke to him, and he replied "no." All the six sisters and brothers emerged in Naanlue and acted in the same manner. The younger sister who had been kind to the chief also arrived; she saluted God and His elders, and then crossed the street to the side where her brother was sitting. She recognized him and asked if he had ~~seen~~ their ancestors. After she had embraced her brother, she started sweeping around some houses of their ancestors, wondering where they had gone. After a short time she disappeared.

God called the chief and made him to understand how all the people living on earth had originated in heaven from different zones. He explained that earth was like a town, the common road to get there was through birth by woman. God told him about how it was wrong to believe that every group of travellers entering a town through one road belong to one kinship, even in most cases they did not know one another; because they had come from different directions and met on that road. God stressed the fact that all the sisters and brothers he claimed to be his kins, were not. They had merely entered into the world from different areas and families with him through one path (parents). The chief was further enlightened of the fact that the younger sister who took no other route than where he was sitting and recognized him was his real sister who originated with him from one flesh and blood. God advised him to think less about brothers and sisters and keep his thought on his own affairs. After the last sentence, the chief found himself back on earth with his people. His sisters and brothers did not know what had happened in heaven, but he did.

DIRECT TRIP TO HEAVEN AND BACK

from Dan lore:

A leper named Ganbo (Guinea fowl trapper) was casted out from the rest of the world and lived lonely in a thatched shelter, far away from his town in the forest. He lived on Guinea fowls which he was fortunate in catching then almost weekly with the Dan stringed traps. The leperous disease carried all his toes and some of his fingers. Mr. Ganbo decided one morning to see God and discuss his problems with him. His faith led him to the conclusion that any route he takes would reach him to heaven.

The Guinea fowl trapper headed towards North-East with a live Guinea fowl through the black forest on animal trails. Despite the high forest, occupied with furious wild animals and his imaginary direction to heaven without any apparent hope, Ganbo's whole thought was on what he would say when he meets Xlan that morning. He slipped suddenly in a trace and incidentally found himself in the center of a strange beautiful and endless town; this town was Naanluo, the heaven. After he had gone through narrating all he wished Xlan to know, Xlan called his daughter Menirnlay, and instructed her to kill the Guinea fowl which Mr. Ganbo gave to him; her father told her to clean the Guinea fowl and hang it over the fire in the kitchen. Menirnlay took a potful of hot water in their bathroom for Mr. Ganbo to have a bath, according to her father's instruction. Xlan poured certain yellowish powder in the water and commanded the leper to bathe himself. Mr. Ganbo was overwhelmed with joy when he got through bathing and found that his sickness had disappeared completely with all his toes and the missing fingers restored. He jumped out of the bathroom and embraced Xlan in tears for joy. Xlan promised to make Mr. Ganbo rich before leaving heaven.

The following morning after the day of his healing was dawn with the sound of DUKPa (the Dan feast and alarm drum), accompanied by singing and dancing in honour of Mr. Ganbo. The day ended with a ceremonial cow feast for Ganbo.

Xlan presented to Mr. Ganbo many young virgins for his wives and one ageable woman to be the headwife. Each wife was given a maid and fifteen men for farming. Ganbo was given men servants and warriors to protect his life and property. The warriors were given four horses each; as for Ganbo and his numerous wives, God supplied them with 1000 horses of various colors. His riches included variety of domestic animals, boxes filled with gorgeous clothes, money and jewels. He was given musicians and dancers with many wise men to serve him as advisors. God supplied Ganbo with sufficient sustenance to last him and his people many years while preparing to be established. Xlan finally handed to him a sacred pancea and amulets and told him to return to earth. Prior to his departure, God gave Ganbo the following warnings:

"After you have crossed the border between heaven and your earth, you will find two roads. The one on your left is very broad and looks clean; on your right is a narrow bush path, this is your road that leads to your country, follow it. The broad road leads to the town of one Mr. Deceiver and his wife Madam Mockery, please, do not take the road. Don't even make a stop when you reach the crossroads; instead, speed up your horse and go directly on the simple bush path," Xlan concluded.

The travel was accompanied by drumming and singing. Chief Ganbo and his headwife, accompanied by warriors led the long procession on their white horses. The singing and drumming confused Mr. Deceiver and his wife Madam Mockery, they rushed to the crossroads to see who were coming. They ran back to their town when they viewed the crowds mixed with horses on a far distance. Tribal King Ganbo halted at the intersection of the two roads, his head wife pushed and shouted at him to speed up with his horse on the right path. He looked on the bushy path and frowned his face for dissatisfaction. His wise men drew their horses to him and reminded him on Xlan's commandment - they advised him to take the bushy path. He surprised them by saying: "How on earth can a man of my type, wearing purple robe with valuable adornments, and travelling with all these riches, go

through a dirty path which in true speaking belongs to poor travellers? Who is going to see me and my riches, including all of you, if I take this bush road?" His headwife and the wise men did all they could to convince him, but he insisted, and suggested to them he would simply make his appearance in the town and then return to them to continue their journey on the narrow path. Despite their refusal to the suggestion, Chief Ganbo turned his horse on the broad road and arrived in Mr. Deceiver's town. Mr. Deceiver greeted him and asked how he managed to recover his health and gained his wealths. After he had gone through explaining the whole story, Mr. He Dinyane (Dan name for deceiver) discouraged him by saying that he had been cheated by God in the Guinea fowl transaction. He accused Ganbo for accepting what he (Ganbo) turned to be a blessing, and added that all he received from Xlan was the value of a single white spot on a Guinea fowl feather. He advised Chief Ganbo to return to God and demand Him to count all the spots on the Guinea fowl he gave him, and then pay the balance that remained unpaid. Mr. Deceiver promised to lead Tribal King Ganbo to another place where he could get fair compensation for his Guinea fowl, if he would yield to his friendly advice. As Mr. Deceiver talked, his wife Yaye-octo Me-an Sornpuuzer (laughter with white teeth or mockery) was rolling on the ground, laughing at Ganbo. King Ganbo became very weak and believed everything his friend Mr. Deceiver told him. He did not even consult his elders and his headwife, he led his caravan back to heaven.

He arrived and expressed his feeling against the Guinea fowl deal. Xlan ordered his daughter Menirnlay to prepare another bath for their guest, and she did. Xlan entered the bathroom and sprinkled some powder over the water which his daughter prepared for Ganbo. He asked Ganbo to take his bath, and he did. Ganbo wept bitterly when he became what he was after he had had his bath. However, there was a hope for him with his friend Mr. Deceiver. God took down his Guinea fowl from the dryer and made it alive with all its feathers - he

returned it to Mr. Ganbo who received it with a frown face for being cheated in the beginning. God told him to carry it any place he wished to get the price he demanded. He told Ganbo not to suffer himself by attempting to return to heaven, the gateway which was once revealed to him through faith would no longer be visible to him. All of a sudden, Ganbo found himself back on earth as a leper.

Immediately after Ganbo's departure from Mr. Deceiver and his wife Madam Mockery's town for heaven, Mr. Deceiver and his wife had collected all the people from their town on the cross-roads with stones and sticks to drive away any leper that may enter their territory. Mr. Ganbo who was ignorant of the fact that he had been deceived and misled by Mr. Deceiver, began counting the white spots on his Guinea fowl as he walked. He walked with the help of a walking stick which he stamped on the ground with his right hand to balance his steps. He began waving the fowl which he held in his left hand to Mr. Deceiver and his crowds with a smile as he approached them. Before he could open his mouth to speak, after he had arrived, Mr. Deceiver was the first to address him as a fool for abusing God's blessing. While Mr. Deceiver was talking, his wife Mrs. Mockery Deceiver was giggling and making faces at Ganbo. Ganbo was finally driven from his friend's premises and he fled with his spotted Guinea fowl.

TO HEAVEN AND BACK THROUGH VISION
As told by the author's uncle Koazy Zayngbe

Uncle Koazy told me he saw a man by the name of Gaye in Butuluo town in 1945 - he said that he knew the man from Leagaulay town in Ivory Coast when he was crazy and disappeared for many years. He asked Gaye how he managed to be cured and where he had been all those years. The followings were what he explained to uncle Koazy:

I was led into the deep forest by the insanity. I used to sleep in the buttresses of large jungle trees and ate grasshoppers and other insects. I had a vision one morning when Klan appeared to me in human form. He was a strong handsome man who wore a cow skin belt with several Zoe knives, sheathed around

round His waist. He merely touched me and I was healed in that moment. He asked if I would follow Him to heaven, I replied "yes," wondering how to get there. He placed in my hand a "kpankpo" (small cone-shaped kneaded earth) and directed me to spit in my hand, and stir the "kpankpo" in the saliva and rub it on my face. This I did, a clean road leading up on a mountain to heaven became visible to me. He led the way and I followed Him step by step until we reached our destination. He arranged an itinerary for me as follow:

(1) XLAN'S AGENTS

Xlan took me into a settlement where I was exposed to numerous naked creatures. He said to me: "Each of these you see represents the invisible Gle (mask), Qui (fetish), and other secret spirits serving man on earth against evil spirits." I covered my mouth with my hands in astonishment; then, I released my mouth and thanked Him.

(2) DEATH GA

After I took a rest, we walked into another strange place where I saw a handsome, naked being which resembled a man but had no sex, revolving like a top. He was introduced to me by Xlan as the expression of death Ga. My head bent instinctively in fright. I did not thank God for this creation, instead, I asked Him to take me to another place as I was not even interested in discussing the death. I expressed my regret for viewing the unkind creature and informed God how I would have begged Him to cancel that particular itinerary if I knew beforehand that we were visiting Ga. Xlan smiled and led me from there.

(3) SYMBOL OF SLEEP

The next morning tour enabled me to see the source of our natural sleep. I saw a tender baby surrounded by some older women who were feeding it with soft rice by forcing the porridge into its mouth. This infant was sleeping soundly. "You see," said Xlan; "this baby is the symbol of sleep - it sleeps throughout the day and night as it is done

on earth." I nodded with appreciation and we left the scene to continue our excursion.

(4) SOURCES OF SICKNESS REVEALED

I was nervous when we visited the home of countless various types of illness embodied in human forms respectively. I easily distinguished one from another; I almost vomited at the sight of numps with his saliva covering his entire body. I frowned my face when Xlan introduced my old enemy Craze, it looked horrible.

(5) SYMBOLIC CREATURE OF HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

How queer things are in heaven! I was stimulated to dance while witnessing an excellent dancer. She was singing and shouting with joy as she danced in the most magnificent arena. I couldn't understand why such a large and beautiful arena could belong to a single dancer. Xlan smiled as I was apparently dancing according to movements my body made while looking at the fantastic creature. He explained that the dancer was the source of health and happiness in the world.

(6) SORROW AND POVERTY

I could ~~control~~^{hardly} my emotion during our short visit to an old faded and feeble lady who sat alone under the eave of a half-ruined daubed hut, roofed with thatch. She sat and leaned her back against the broken wall of the hut with her knees up and the legs apart. Her left elbow was placed on her left knee and the left hand was supporting her head which she lowered on the left shoulder. Her right hand rested on her right knee - tears were dripping down her cheeks as she looked pitfully with pierced eyes in one direction. Xlan turned to me in pityful mood and made it known to me again that the old lady was the source of sorrow and poverty on earth.

(7) THE MOON

Xlan pointed out to me the position of the moon. I followed it, but when I reached where it was standing, I burst into laughter for its simplicity. The moon resembled a "likpa" (medium size communication drum with four nonoxylous legs); the legs served as buttresses and the head like drum pointed toward the earth to give light. The whole area spotted with light and the soil was soft and beautiful.

(8) THE SUN

I took upon myself one afternoon to trace the sun. I walked many hours without reaching it. Xlan, who found me absent from my residence rushed and called me loud to return or else I would fall into a deep sea or get burnt if I continue further. My heart jumped with fear, I obeyed and did not see the sun to know its description.

(9) LIGHTENING

My last itinerary was lively and sensational, all that I saw were beyond my imagination about lightening. I was compelled to cover my both ears with hands to reduce the terrific noise the lightening was producing as we approached the lightening power station. The power establishment had two separate, tremendous crystal buildings. The tall constructions were about 200 leg-strides (approximately 200 yards) apart with their storied doors, facing each other. Each building contained a lightening phenomenon like spider. I watched them moving spontaneously to and fro on a thick inter-woven webs that linked a strong bridge between the two constructions. My Host Xlan lectured to me on many operational aspects of the station and concluded that the blaring sound "goo-oo" (storn) we can hear on earth is the speed of the lightening phenomenae on their webbed bridge: lightening occurs when one of the devices misses its tracks and collides with the other. Particles produced from the collision cause damages.

I wish you were there with me on that adventurous trip to share the blessing of seeing those mysterious scenes, some of which I was told not to expose. Xlan presented to me some amulets and promised me transformation into heaven. I preferred to remain but He insisted that I come to fulfil the purpose for which I was born. Something occurred to me suddenly like a dream and I found myself back on earth on the road leading to my home town Leagauly in Ivory Coast, which town I had not seen for many years, he concluded.

XLAN AND SPIDER'S KWEH-CHLEH

Kweh-chleh is the name of a kind of trade and mutual transaction between the two Dan friends in the early days. The procedure of Kweh-chleh was that a member of Kweh-chleh would visit his friend with some local products from his area for his friend. He usually spent many months in his friend's home to learn some arts and craft of the area. When he was ready to return to his home town, his friend would present him gifts of mats, cloths, handicrafts, and some farm products from the section. The general rule for Kweh-chleh was not to disappoint a visiting member by returning home without presents from his host, whether he came from his home with gifts to his host or not.

After Xlan and Mr. Spider had met and agreed to enter into this friendly business, Mr. Spider was the first to visit Xlan frequently; always returning to his home with wealths. Mr. Spider invited Xlan one day to visit him also and share the wealths of his Kingdom, as he had told Xlan earlier that he was a wealthy tribal King on earth.

The time Mr. Dangaye (spider in Dan) appointed was at hand and Xlan's loads began pouring into King Dangaye's Kingdom (poor little village). King Spider informed the carriers who had brought the Xlan's loads; that he was very sick, they should return with the loads and tell his friend - King Spider was lying down by the fire side in his house while talking to the carriers from heaven.

God felt sorry for His friend Chief Dangay (Spider) when the news got to him in heaven; He sent sickness Headache to earth ^{to} see if he was the one suffering His friend. Mr. Headache returned from earth and reported to Xlan that he was not there. God called Miss Intestinal Disorder to go down and check if she was the one affecting his friend. The sickness returned also and reported her absence with Chief Spider. All the types of sickness in heaven visited King Spider and returned with the same report. Xlan then sent Mr. "SHAME" to make the last visit - he returned with a smile from earth and told Xlan that he was all over Mr. Spider who claimed to be a King when he had nothing enough for himself even to share with his poor family.

BIRTH OF RELIGION FROM HEAVEN

From Dan lore:

Xlan surprised the world one day when He came down from heaven and toured throughout the entire earth for a special fact finding related to man's feelings towards Him. He visited each chief with a question to know whether that chief had any grievance against Him. As a chief denied, he joined Xlan's retinue and followed Him. Mr. Spider was the last to arrive in his town. When the same question was given to him, he answered thus:

"I have many grievances against you, MENKERME (creator). My parents had all died with several relatives. Each time I wept, comforters would tell me that you were the one who took them. All my misfortunes were said to be your cause. Here am I in poverty while others enjoy life that you gave us." Xlan turned to the noble rulers who had all denied having animosity against God, and admonished them for not telling the truth. He made it known to them that it was not what is said from the lips that He conceives but that which is said from the heart. Xlan admitted how Mr. Spider had spoken out his feeling, consequently, He would expose to him the secrets of those happenings. Xlan revealed for the first time to man among other things concerning

pre-existence, the life beyond the grave, reincarnation, and outlined His rules for living after death. He also told Mr. Spider about everlasting death which is soul vanishing and non-reincarnation. He taught him about kinds of life that would make a man live after death and those that are led to soul vanishing. Mr. Spider was convinced and lived in hope for rotational life beyond the grave with his ancestors and back on earth with his kin.

TWENTY-FOUR PROVERBS RELATED TO GA

The intention of these proverbs is to mention the ethical maxims and admonitions relating to death in the social and cultural life of the Dan tribe as was the case with our previous study dealing with legends, metaphysical concepts, customs, and beliefs of the tribe on death.

For this reason, these twenty-four proverbs are both in Dan and English. The omission of their interpretations is to avoid the loss of strength and direct impact of the sayings on the reader who will find them, as they are, very much understandable and appealing in their directness.

THE PROVERBS

1. Ga doe la doe.
One life one death.
2. Mirn yaa lo to e le gor-eh e po ka n gba zungor-or blu ka.
The child who would not live long for his mother demands to eat an ant's liver.
3. N'ka nu an gror-or nmaa lo ma'n nguun ken kpona ka.
I have not come to live long, why build such a strong fence around my habitation?
4. Gon-on kporleh wo dor waa galeh dor.
Man knows the place of his birth and not the place for his death.
5. Me'n doe bunla yaa kir peteh.
One man cannot have two graves.
6. Du kun n ka am n fluu blu ma'n n de ga won nmaen ka.
I am not a cow to wag my tail when I have heard about my own death.

7. Zo to ga ler me'n yaa bor-u kir.
A man who has thought on death may not become rich in life.
8. Ga e won lo me'n nyan-en, a pir yaa me'n dinya.
The death which is known to a man cannot threaten him with any signs.
9. Ga po ninyan mun, yaa bor me'n doe gor.
Well, death is a stranger who does not visit one person.
10. Waa suer dir, Glebor-or zinya, nirn loa man-en yaa po
n le nu koe dorn gor.
There is no fear on the path to the home of the dead, even if a child is going there would not ask her mother to accompany her.
11. Ga leh yaa n ker, ann lo fooer.
Since I do not intend to die, I will not faint.
12. Ga yaa leh-eh kpor ker.
Death does not ask question.
13. Waa ga me'n luwo seh ka.
Ground is never refused for the dead.
14. Buo leh gle kir, gbay yaa way-ah.
A dead wishes to come back to life but weeping will not allow it.
15. Me'n mander ga won yi kan me'n gru, a leh yaa me'n kun.
The death of one's enemy is pleasing to his heart and yet he is free of guilt.
16. Gle yaa gru pa. A corpse never fills up its tomb.
17. Nwor-or kpa gle bach, wo bin-en.
Because the fly stuck to the corpse, it was buried with it.
18. Fir me'n e-e goe zon Glebor-or.
It is a liar that names his witness in the home of the dead.
19. N ka ga kun, ker n boo gbien nyehn lo dor.
I am not yet dead, how could I have the scent of putrefaction?
20. Ga won dor-u e ga won zee bo me'n li.
News of a new death stops discussing of old ones.

21. N'me, me'n ka kpon la-eh, a me'n Glebor-or.
He that has no relative on earth must have one in the realm of the dead.
22. Kpa bo me'n yaa boo zon.
A reincarnated man does not know his old farm site.
23. Le kie ga yi e kir koa gle su yi ka.
It happened that a dead chimpanzee was picked on the very day an old lady died. (Proverb denoting suspicion). An old lady is said to resemble a chimpanzee. If a man is seen with a dead chimpanzee on the day of the death and burial of an old lady, he may be suspected digging up the old lady.
24. Ga tor-or ga. Death is death.

C H A P T E R T W O

HOW DEATH CAME TO ZOE VA TABNEN

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(A)

TABMEN'S BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

The late Tabmen (author's father) was born to Gblor Kpeahgbe of Nyor Diaplay town and his wife Wonsir Baapoolu from Danplay town in Yao-le Clan, in the town of Nyor Diaplay, Nimba County. The meaning of his name Tabmen is traveller. His father gave him the name with intention that his son would grow to be a traveller and bring him wealths in the future. incidentally, Tabmen became a traveller and brought many riches to his father. He was one of the Dan's highly talented men. As a craftsman and artists, he went to many places working for chiefs and teaching their people; he would return to his town and clan with various new forms of artistic inspiration. As a ZOENPOIR (blacksmith and ceremonial mask carver), he was leader of Council of Elders of his town and clan. In addition to that, he was very famous in wrestling, hunting, dancing, etc.

Having being in contact with researchers in Dan anthropology, his name appears in such works as the following publications: "Dan Religion" by Himmelheber and Tabmen, and "Basler Zur Geographie Und Ethnologie Ethnologische Reihe" Band 2 by Professor Festchrift Alfred Butler of Basel Museum, Switzerland. Ceremonial masks carved by the late Tabmen can be seen in the Basel Museum, Rietberg Museum in Zurich, Dr. Hans Himmelheber's Private Collection in Heidelberg, and perhaps in the Peabody Museum in the United States of America where the late Dr. Harley of the Ganta Methodist Mission sent many Dan masks collected from Butuluo area (Tabmen's clan) when the author was his agent.

Tabmen died as a Christian. He was converted through the late Rev. A.C.Holloway of the Gaaplay Station, Liberian Inland Mission.

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(3)

TABMEN'S BURIAL

Woboa was asked to select a spot either in their Waulay (cemetery) or any other place he might find suitable. Tabmen's wife Lezuo indicated a spot in the cemetery vicinity that Tabmen selected for his burial long before he was even sick; it was confirmed by elders who were present that day when Tabmen pointed the site for his burial. When the digging of the grave has begun, Tabmen's brother Yakersir called and told Woboa that he would prefer his brother to be buried along the side of the grave of their father Gblor. Woboa ran back to those who were digging and told them to stop and do as Kersir (short way of Yakersir) pleased. "No! You are late. No spot for a grave should be changed when the ground has already been broken; and if a change is made, the first deserted broken ground will call for another death from the same family to occupy it." Woboa did not utter any word again after Oldman Wehi's refusal, they continued with their digging on the same spot which was not even far from Gblor's grave.

After the grave was dug, a presentation of money and clothes was made by relatives, friends, and in-laws. Some of the gifts were buried with him for his travel to Glebor-or. The relatives present at the burial swore over the corpse and asked him to catch them if they have been the cause of his death by witchcraft or by any other shady dealing. An announcement was made for all the children to go eastward to the edge of the town before their father's remains could be transformed from the house. (The spirit of the dead is said to move westward during the removal of the corpse to the funeral ground.) The children returned to their houses after hearing guns shooting to announce their father's disappearance from the earth. It was midnight. Corpse Gle Zon-binya presided over the burial ceremony with the accompaniment of the ritual blow-drums Glenuon.

All bereaved relatives shaved their hair in sign of mourning. They ate only light food after few days fasting, and ate "baye" during four days. Rice, which is the favorite food of the Dan tribe was forbidden during that period. The bereaved did not bath or dress in decent clothes for the period of four days. A fire was kindled in front of the house to warm his spirit. When the fire was taken away at the end of the four days, Woboa was told that his father's spirit left the same day from the house.

Among the Dan Po-me, as it is generally known among many black African tribes, counting up to four is symbolic of the male and number three of the female; i.e. at the birth of a child the confinement period of mother and baby extends to four or three days depending on the sex of the newly born.

(D)

PARTAKING TABMEN'S SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE

The participants to the ceremony were wrestlers, wood carvers, hunters, warriors, dancers, and blacksmiths from Leron quarter. The morning after the burial was very special. Wood carvers with their tools, hunters with their guns, wrestlers with their costumes, and all concerned, were accompanied by their respective musicians and actors. They marched or danced around and through the house in which the remains were placed and where the first major ceremony was conducted for Tabmen's

first son Woboa prior to the removal of the corpse. Each participant performed four times, and each time he passed through the house offered a word of prayer in connection with his wish; calling out Tabmen's name.

(E)

MOURNING FOR THE DEATH OF A HUSBAND

Madam Lezuo, Tabmen's wife, went into a traditional mourning for her husband. This form of mourning is called in the Dan dialect GINYAN BOU or LO SIE ZLE SI. She sat in ashes by fire side in her house with all her hair disheveled and did not take bath for four days neither stepped outdoor. She was confined in the house and had conversation with no one except for widows who had previously being in mourning in the same manner. She ate with her left hand.

She was escorted to Deyay creek at the end of the four days, counting from the day of her husband's burial. Ceremony of sanctification and proof for not being the cause of her husband's death were performed upon her. There she was bathed and shaved. Prior to her bath, her back and front were covered with certain abrasive leaves by her escort of old women - she dived under the water by their order and came forth on shore with all the leaves off. This proved her innocent that she had not by malice or witch caused her husband to die. They brought her in town and she sat in public on a reed mat before her house where she received gifts from sympathizers and from Tabmen's

relatives. Tears started dripping down her cheeks at the view of Woboa, Tabnen's first son who is said to resemble his father more than all his brothers and sisters. Woboa gave all the requirements but did not stay for the end of the ceremony as he was himself filled with sorrow.

A man or a woman who did not mourn for a lost one in the manner as explained above is said to be unsanctified, and is even suspected of having had part in the death directly or indirectly. In the case of a wife's death, the husband mourns for the period of three days. A widow and widower who did not go into the traditional mourning are bound, according to the belief, to loose two succeeding husbands and three more wives respectively.

To complete the mourning, Madam Lezuo restricted herself for another four months from sex, visiting people, walking in the center of a road, and did not even walk in the center of her own house - she walked on the sides of roads and the corners of her house.

(F)

FAREWELL FEAST

This feast is called WUOBOZINYA. The Dans believe that during the four days after the death of a man, his Zuu (spirit) waits to see what would be given to him to carry to his ancestors. Whatever is killed at the feast is believed to appear to the deceased alive. Tabmen's brother Yakirsir made the feast at the end of the days with goats, sheep, and crakes. The feast was a solemn feast without music. The fire that was made before Tabmen's house was cleared away the same day.

(G)

THE TRADITIONAL COW FEAST

Amidst various celebrations, as time passed by the eighth and final day was reached. It was to be the culminating point of the festivities, (object of all expectations.) It was the day of the cow feast.

It had been arranged previously with the usual ceremonial and protocol manner, the elders of Larnon quarter under the leadership of Tabnen's uncle Wehi marching processionally to the hut of the Council of Elders to inform Clan Chief Miane of the intention of the family. This preparatory meeting lasted three and a half hours. Question was raised by the Clan Chief if the departed forebears of the quarter had ever satisfied to the requirements of the Gor society for public performances. This called for witnesses, and old Mother Kunkweh moved to reply that Tabnen's father Gblor had to her knowledge paid the Family's dues in that respect. She gave the name of the Nyor Clan Chief and some town chiefs at the time to whom Gblor made the payment. So the Council of Elders was at liberty to authorize the feast, and Woboa, the eldest son of the deceased "robed" the Clan Chief, meaning that he made him a gift of a ceremonial country-cloth gown and dressed him on the spot with his own hands. Then, he also robed the Council's elders, and the chief bade him to robe all elders of his quarter and to give "lappas" to all married women therein. Woboa acted accordingly.

Since that day, all open festivities, performances and contests had been in preparation for the last solemn day when all rivulets would converge to make one deep and broad river.

On the morning of that day, Woboa Tabnengb had to perform two demonstrations: war demonstration with the Larnon sacred spear WONTEHN and hunting and war-mask "movement" with the sacred "GOAN" cap gun. He was all the while accompanied by the warriors of the clan and by GAO GLE, a solemn and respected masked figure. Then he was mounted on the shoulders of a special bearer and taken to tour the entire town while people were shouting with joy.

As for the performers, musicians, maskers and all public figures of the Festival's open cycle, it was an all day event which started with music and would finish with music all over the town. Musical instruments of various nature were heard and seen everywhere. Even the leaves in the surrounding forest seemed to be dancing by ~~the~~^{the} unrelenting and never ending beats and rhythms. Echoes from horns and wooden trumpets were responding to each other, and when there was relative silence, one could hear the insistent melody of the secret blow-drums within the restricted cult-enclosure. Performers were all around: jugglers, wrestlers, dancing groups, stilt dancers, all on rehearsal for the afternoon, giving private performances for the benefit of whoever would donate them with presents. They were all around.

The Gao mask, faithful to an old tradition, kept beating the bare backs of his musicians each time, provoking a fantastic "bao" sound while the smiling musicians did not miss a note. This Gao mask was the first to be seen on that day, it was the announcer of the occasion and it could be seen travelling fast all around and across the village while the people pushed to receive their stray dogs from its path, for Gao, angry as a leopard would whip them from its way and they were sure to die.

Wuti and Dargi, ceremonial sport-masks were in full mischief, throwing their curved sticks "kao" to their musicians, and pouring on them hot or cold water. These musicians could be seen jumping and jumping while playing to evade the attacks of their masters.

Forever renewed show was going on under the sun and in the dust, dancer Gban, the inimitable, inspired his audience to imitation, his flexible body bending to all directions while shaking on the rhythmic beat. More quietly, story teller Kahgongor had drawn a large crowd telling stories as his group of seven boys danced and sang the singing parts of the legend, all dressed in gorgeous "lappas" or laps (KANSOR OR IESOR).

Yomo singers Wontohn and N'kador were at the other corner of the town amusing the audience with their songs on diamond mining, jumping and stamping their feet, dancing back and forth in their characteristic manner.

Later on came out the teen-aged girls emerging from chief Dehne's house with their old cow-dance on the song: "N'zo peelo way peelo way, narn wor n gbiaka; n'zo peelo peelo, narn da'n kayeika." Moving forward rhythmically with the first phrase, at the word "gbiaka" they would fall backward with a sinuous movement, gracious and beautiful when executed by so many young lithe bodies. They were forty-eight in six lines, wearing "lappas" with loops of gaudy beads around their waists. White clay decorated their bodies, faces, and their legs in many patterns.

Backward and forward, with serpentine movements, the forty-eight danced while singing; and babies, some painted in white also were crawling in the dust after then their natural guardians, and some picked up their charge and with the babies kept dancing backward and forward, their bodies coiling and extending like snakes. Hunters were seen with their guns and "SUO" fetish in procession, dramatizing the hunting in the bush. They were accompanied by Noah Tuogbe and his "Krah" musicians. Snake society members performed and the people were all happy to see and applaud them since they had the assurance that while the society was there with their members and medicines there could be no victim of snake bite among the crowd. It was a rare occasion when Gontee, leader of the society, could be seen dancing, crawling snake-like between the legs of the audience.

Wrestlers fought shouting and bending as Tougbay and his Luu guitar improvised songs in their honor. The Luu played and it was a wonder to be able to catch its luminous notes in the thunder of the blasting surrounding orchestras, and old people following Tougbay processionally wondered and exchanged their fears who would play the Luu for younger generations when Tougbay would be no more.

Then there were the Manpo girls with their fifty different steps, sixteen of them most of them virgins and blooming in breast and curves, gracious, unsmiling however, but tantalizing the young men by their movements, their litherness, their curves and the rivulets of sweat coiling on their torsos. Young men pressed around them and many at time Wutii and Dargi masks were called to help drive away the bunch of young wolves.

So the day passed into afternoon, many groups having retired in expectation of the time 4:00 p.m. set for the partaking of the feast. An announcement was made that the food would be partaken in front of Yakirsir's house where it was already on display: food prepared with one cow, sixteen goats and sheep, countless small meat.

At that moment the sky that had been shiny all day was rapidly covered with dark clouds, and signs of rain coming were felt. Everybody had their heads anxiously upwards, and Woboa advised that the meat should be brought indoors. Wehi stormed toward him: "Indoors? Then there is no more power. Is that what you learned in your books? If the rain comes, everything is in vain, the feast and our lives. Come, the rain will not come. If it comes, then everything is vanity, life and death, and this village, and the others, and all Africa, come".

He was as angry as a tiger. He seized Woboa by the arm and brought him into the open, at a cross-roads. Turning in the direction of the cemetery: "Repeat after me", said he to Woboa, and he called the names of the Larnon quarter's ancestors. He called on then violently, roughly, urgently, because at that time a few drops of rain had started: "I'm calling you", cried he. The whole town remained silent. Wehi, with his hands on Woboa's arm, appeared at Tabmen's grave: "Are you deaf, lazy, and without power?" Cried he. "You cannot let your son down." He turned to every corner with a serious face, an illuminated one would say by his inner faith: "Come on, you all", said he, "give us the sun."

The dumbfounded Woboa saw it and lived it, and still could not believe what he saw: of a sudden, the dark clouds were rent as a curtain, and they vanished, and the golden rays of the sun was advancing toward the scene. Gehndin, the masker supreme in its performance, animated at each step by an uncoiling movement from bottom to top, and the elaborate raffia structure at the top shook softly as it was seen coming in raising and falling at each step, growing all the time as Gehndin approached.

It was too much for the people. The anxiety, the dark sky, Wehi's orders to the invisible, and in the first ray of sun the masker supreme coming in with its escort. The village burst with a shout, all troupes, all maskers, all singers, all instruments, "Wonkirlonu" with their ceremonial wooden spoons, everybody old and young and the babies converging to the center, to the heart of the village, and Woboa kept thinking: "was there ever a cow feast like this one?"

The food was distributed; gifts were exchanged; many young men chose on the spot their fiancées and manifested their sentiment with gifts to them and the virgins were saying "yes" with their heads bent.

Early evening was for drinking palm wine and other spirits among men in expectation of the meat; and after supper, there was story and Monleh joke telling all around, Kahgongor occupying the limelight among the story tellers. And of course there was the instrument made for the silence of the night: Tougbay's Tau throwing notes over the roofs like luminous stars.

And the feast was not quite finished, because there would be in the early morning the special ceremony of "eating the cow dewlap", Yakirsir waking Woboa at 4:00 in the morning and taking him to the sacred hut where that special ceremony would be performed with the Clan Chief Miane and all the elders concerned. It was a wonder the manner in which the Dans arranged the eating of the dewlap of the cow.

PHOTO

Clan Chief Miane with his spear under his cheek and family at the feast.

The eight days feast ended in success and harmony. The clan chief proposed another feast in which more than one cow would be killed.

PHOTO

Woboa Tabmengbe with some brothers and sisters before their father's grave - Woboa is standing above in a Dan attire.

(H)

THE PERFORMERS

Masked Dancers:

Gao Gehndin, and Dargie Gle masked dancers from Nyor Diaplay and Wutii masked dancer from Nyor Gbanway, participated throughout the ceremony. Gao Gle is the war mask of Larnon quarter. Gehndin is the story teller and dancer which imitates the various aspects of people's life when performing. It also belongs to the Larnon quarter. Wutii and Dargie are Gao Gles (ceremonial sport mask) that perform with curved sticks with which they beat their musicians and men that come on their way. Their masks are ugly, and some have whiskers. Gao Gle mask has protruded eyes, encircled with white metals; it has a feather head-dress above the mask. Its teeth are from cow. Gehndin mask also has protruded eyes encircled with white metals. The Gao Gle danced by two slit drums which were played by drummers Bao Nyuangbe and Duo Iliamegbe. The two drums were accompanied by a wooden fife that was blown by Noah Tuogbe, the Ara musician. The same type of slit drums were employed for Gehndin Gle performance and Mangblin Zehigbe assisted Duo Iliamegbe and Bao Nyuangbe to beat them. The two Gao Gles used the similar slit drums with animal horns accompaniment.

THE DANCER GBAN AND HIS GROUP

Gban is the young man from Nyor Diaplay who was once a Zoe for the Dan "Gle gben" (stilt dancer). Now he performs the dance of the stilt on the ground. He wore anklets called Zeh made from hard seed pods. He used two kettle drums Baa that were beaten with the drummers' hands, and a pair of gourd rattles with beaded stripes. Gban wore a headgear made from ram mane with cowrie shells embellishment. He and his of musicians and drummers wore country cloth skirts and his was specially designed with colorful fringes.

Story Teller Kagongor

Kagongor is the Dan boy from Gayeeplay in Ivory Coast who came to Diaplay for the feast with seven boys that performed with him. Kagongor employed India bamboo slit drum and wore a pair of Zeh rattles for his dancing. Kagongor and his group really impressed the public with their stories and music.

Yomo Singers

Wohntehn Talo from Zinya Baylehglay and N'kador from Yao Nyaalay are noted for their Yomo singing with many songs. They employed broken pieces of shovels as percussion instruments. They sang and danced amusingly for the general public, especially for youths and the diamond miners who composed the song.

Wonkalonu

Wonkalonu are the outstanding women of the Dan tribe in each town. They perform with the ceremonial spoons and are responsible for all public cow feasts. The group that performed at the feast came from Diaplay.

They performed with their spoons, dressed in gorgeous attires, and followed by girls with buckets on which they knocked with hard beaters as they moved back and forth rhythmically in step with the Wonkalonu.

Kra (Hunters' Songs) Group

Noah Tuogbay and his Kra group were assigned to the contesting hunters who were hunting for wild games by the magic of the fetish called SUO. The Kra songs are said to cause the incarnation of SUO into hunters. Some of the blood of all animals killed is poured over on the SUO fetish.

SNAKE SOCIETY GROUP

Snake Society leader Gorgbay Gontee and his group used two damans. (Daman is double membrane drum made in the shape of an hour glass). Many guests were initiated into the society during its session for the feast. The two "damans" were beaten by Waymee Kuagbe and Gbor-or Tabmengbe. Gontee, the society head, wore society headgear Blavia with cowrie shells and bells ornamentation.

Guitarist Tougbay from Nyor Gbanway

Old man Tougbay whose father had been also a guitar player performed on the Dan guitar called Luu. Luu has six piassava strands mounted on a carved wooden sound box. Tougbay was assigned to old people for evening performance. He also entertained the wrestlers and warriors from different towns in Liberia and Ivory Coast during the feast.

The Manpo Dancers

Sixteen Manpo dancers who performed at the feast wore "zeh" rattles and held such dancing tassels called "maleeka-pablir" made of raffia fabrics. The Manpo dance was accompanied by a single kettle drum "baa" - beaten by a male drummer called Forkoe. The fifty three songs to the dance were led by two girl-soloists Nyiapuu and Mankra, with refrain repeated by all the dancers. These dancers came from Deinplay town in Butuluo clan, partly trained and costumed by the author.

THE DAN MYSTICAL CONCEPTS INTERPRETED AS A RELIGION

Religion is essentially made of beliefs without proof. No dead person has come back to earth to live among us and tell the living of God's reaction to his religion or testify on the conditions in the "hereafter".

The New Testament says that Christ, God's son and Himself God, raised from the dead. Yet Christ, his teachings, the miracles of His life and death did not give birth to ONE church. Separate groups have their own interpretation of the Holy Bible, of Christ teachings, of His person, meaning that to Christians, and other churches, religion is largely made of beliefs without ascertained proof.

Now the question is: Would God accept all these churches as based on His words and issued from Christ? If the answer is: NO; then which one is acceptable?

The Africans have their own religion which they fully believe to be as true to their life and to their relation with God as they conceive HIM. To call them heathen or fetishists or animists, or a superstitious lot does not resolve the problem of the pertinence of their beliefs as derived from concepts formulated in the conditions of their own "revelation". Even accepting the word "superstition" as opposed to the true and noble revelation of the Old and New Testaments, what is a superstition but beliefs produced by creative thinking applied to the unknown, to the unproved. As such they can be found mingled with the most advanced forms of religion. If the God of the Bible is THE ONE AND UNIQUE, then He created the Africans and these true sons have equal right to their own way of communication and relation until conviction of better ways, if any and if accepted, may prevail. Meanwhile they believe that God created them as he created the whole world, that their destiny is ordained by Him unless they chose, as free agents, to stray into the devil's paths. Does that make them different from the christians, or from the Mahomedans or for that matter from the Jews; and does this assign their creed and beliefs to some sub-human realm of superstition?

The concepts of Death (Ga) as exposed in this work are part of the Dan religion. AA and Xlan appear very much as the christian combination of Father and Son; the Ordainer and Redeemer. We should all smile leniently to the efforts of the lost children of an unholy world to apprehend and comprehend a far away Master, Lord and Sovereign who gives as sense of destiny to their obscure pilgrimage.

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